

Anacostia Transit-Area

Strategic Investment and Development Plan

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DC Office of Planning

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1 Executive Summary

The Anacostia neighborhood is at the cusp of positive change. Numerous planning, transportation, and design studies have been completed over the past years and recent projects have begun to implement interim improvements as well as important elements of an overall vision. The Gateway Government Center, a new Main Street organization, the light rail demonstration project, commercial façade improvements, and public realm improvements have started the revitalization of the Anacostia transit area. The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, a redesigned South Capitol Street Bridge, redevelopment at St. Elizabeth's and other District-wide planning projects also have catalytic potential .

Despite substantial challenges, there are clear signs Anacostia is on the rebound. Home sales are showing steady increases in price as well as volume. Population and households are stabilizing and rising. Retail demand is positive and growing.

MARKET CONDITIONS

Extensive quantitative market analysis supplemented by interviews with developers and the finance community indicates substantial unmet demand for housing and retail in the Anacostia Metro station area. Studies indicate the market would absorb housing sold at prices between \$150,000 - \$300,000 or rented between \$800 - \$1,200 per month. Given its relatively low land costs, Anacostia is in a unique position to provide the much needed middle-income and workforce housing missing in today's market and therefore play an important role in overall city stability. Over the next decade the Anacostia Transit Area will demand:

Housing:

1,200 new or rehabilitated housing units

Retail:

Up to 100,000 sq. ft. additional convenience and food service retail space

Up to 65,000 sq.ft. shopper's goods retail

Office:

Planned new office space will be occupied by up to 1,000 additional employees

FRAMEWORK PLAN

The Anacostia Transit Area Framework Plan envisions the revitalization of Anacostia and vicinity as a vibrant urban village offering a diversity of goods, services, employment and residential opportunities. Once a streetcar suburb, the Anacostia Transit Area is restored and anchored by its transit assets which, in turn, reconnect it to the resources of the region. It is a place where walking and transit are the first choice for transportation as convenient and enjoyable modes.

The Anacostia Transit Area Framework Plan seeks to offer more than just a compelling vision. It offers the potential for a future that is founded in market realities, compatible with community objectives, and tested for physical feasibility. The Framework Plan is based on the following planning principles.

1 Serve the pedestrian

Improve pedestrian safety, enhance access to transit resources, and strengthen existing street corridors with active, attractive, and interesting ground floor use and design.

2 Take advantage of transit

Build appropriate densities and diverse mixed-use developments on sites with good Metro access. Design model transit-oriented projects that fit into the neighborhood. Utilize transit assets to attract and accommodate the additional residents and residential units required to support a successful retail district.

3 Strengthen Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue

Strengthen the Martin Luther King Jr. corridor by restoring two-way traffic, locating active retail uses at the ground floor along the sidewalk's edge, improve pedestrian quality and streetscape elements and attract additional retail to the corridor.



Anacostia Transit Area Framework Plan

4 Connect

Overcome existing barriers to improve connections from one neighborhood to another, from community to park, between neighborhood destinations, and across the river.

5 Celebrate the past, welcome the future

Respect the Anacostia Historic District by investing in existing historic building stock. Design contemporary new buildings distinct from and complementary to the historic stock.

6 Go Green

Enhance open space, provide landscaped connections to the park, encourage environmental stewardship of natural resources, and promote sustainable building design practices.



View of Anacostia with the future Poplar Point in the foreground

NODE PLANS

The Anacostia Transit Area envisions four distinct nodes of activity – each interconnected to serve discrete needs within the neighborhood and build from each area’s natural assets. A different vision guides development and investment within each node.

Metro Node

With 7,000 daily rail riders and even more bus boardings, the Anacostia Metro station is among the busiest outside of the downtown core. The strength of the existing transit resource and the new light rail service draws and supports additional housing opportunities within a short walk of the transit station accommodating existing residents and attracting back Anacostia’s middle class base. Modest ground floor retail provides convenient services and street level activity that enhances the transit area. Meanwhile, new investments in educational and recreational facilities establish a strong civic anchor further enhancing the attractiveness and livability of the neighborhood. Significant improvements to pedestrian paths make the transit station accessible, inviting and safe from all quadrants of the neighborhood. A wide band of green along Howard Road connects the neighborhood to the redeveloped Poplar Point and Anacostia Park. The Bethlehem Baptist site on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, offering the first opportunity for new development in the neighborhood, is developed with a mixture of single and multi-family homes above new retail establishments facing the Metro.

W Street Node

W Street is a critical crossroad as the link from the commercial main street to the historic heart of Anacostia – Cedar Hill, the home of legendary abolitionist and editor Fredrick Douglass. An extended W Street reaches beyond a future light rail station and across the highway to provide a prominent link into the new Poplar Point Park and the expanded amenities there. The node is a transition between the retail center at the Gateway and the transportation hub of the Metro station. It offers new and diverse housing options including condominiums, apartments, restored historic homes, artist studios, and live-work units complementing the existing office resources. Studios and

workshops for artists, architects, authors and others drawn and inspired by the area's rich heritage are accommodated in new and former light industrial spaces. Groceries and national retailers line the sidewalk edge bookending and supporting the diverse boutique offerings of the main street district against additional anchor retail at the gateway site. Enhanced public space around the Big Chair provides an important community gathering place and highlights the importance of this historic crossroad. The current expansive parking lot of Curtis Properties' is redeveloped as a mixed-use development including national retailers and a number of upper floor residential units with commanding views of the Washington skyline.

Gateway Node

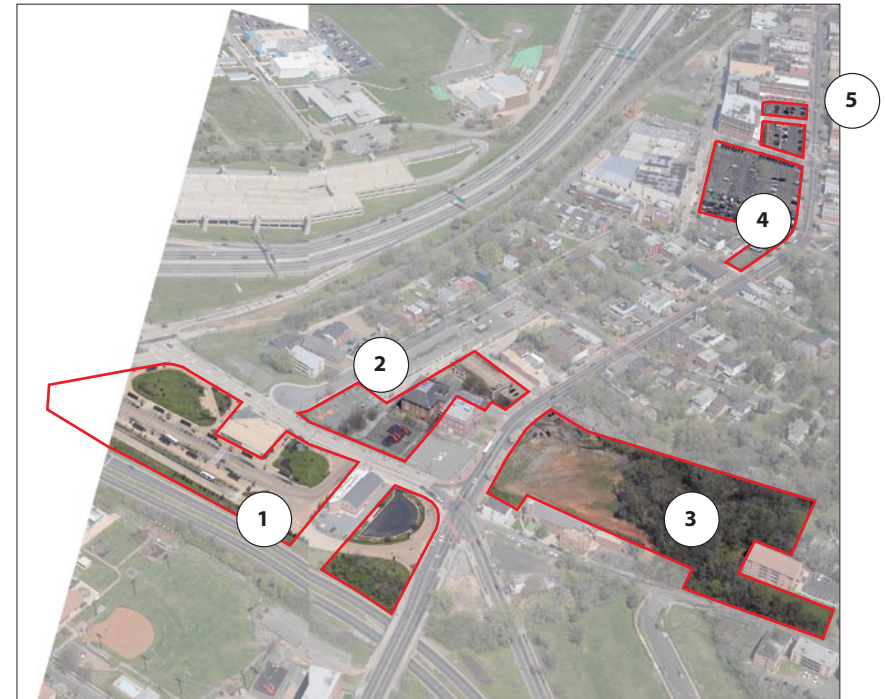
The intersection of Good Hope Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue at the base of the 11th Street bridges serves as the gateway and nucleus of activity for the transit area communities. Here a diversity of uses mix to provide lively 24-hour activity. Workers, shoppers, artists, and residents of all ages and incomes mingle along a restored traditional main street filled with eclectic shops at street level with offices, residences, and studios above. A new light rail station connects the neighborhood downtown to points north and south along and across the river. A short walk down the pedestrian "green way" provides a quiet haven from the activity of the village center along the Anacostia Park and riverwalk. The Gateway Site is developed in the early years of the plan as a major local employment center of significant new office, active ground floor uses, and attractive public spaces.

Poplar Point Node

The green gateway to the river, Poplar Point is restored following the reconstruction and realignment of the South Capitol Street Bridge. Mixed income housing and small retail offerings ring a signature waterfront park. Redesigned transportation infrastructure improves connections from this waterfront destination back into Anacostia, transit amenities, and destinations all along the waterfront.

OPPORTUNITY SITE STUDIES

Large, pre-assembled parcels near to Metro offer catalytic opportunities for early development in the Anacostia area. Pro formas completed for various development scenarios on these key sites confirm market feasibility for substantial new development. Accounting assumed generous parking ratios, land costs, construction costs, and necessary profit margin. Pro-formas were based on reasonably expected sales and rental rates.



Opportunity sites in Anacostia

- 1 Metro Site
- 2 Bethlehem Baptist Church Site
- 3 Nichols School Site
- 4 Curtis Property Site
- 5. Gateway Site (not shown)

METRO NODE

Bethlehem Baptist Site

The large, 4-acre Bethlehem Baptist site is the most promising for early development. The site is currently cleared of buildings and generally unused. The up hill slope presents a modest challenge, but also provides opportunities for residences with spectacular views of the river and city skyline. Two development scenarios evaluated for the site both yield abundant new housing opportunities, but require zoning adjustments. Both scenarios improve neighborhood connectivity and access to the metro station from points in Hillside and Fort Stanton and both provide substantial new retail opportunities. Open green space provides an amenity to the community and highlights the existing church building. 230 – 250 residential units and necessary parking can be accommodated together with 11,000 – 15,000 square feet of additional retail (approximately 4 - 7 new shops).



Potential development on the Bethlehem Baptist site

Anacostia Metro Station

The nearly 4-acre WMATA Joint Development opportunity located immediately above Metro's south entrance could feasibly support substantial new development in both a high-use and moderate-use scenario under current zoning. Both scenarios provide the neighborhood with a diversity of new housing choices, substantial new retail, a better bus transit facility and improved pedestrian environment. High-use provides over 300 residential units and 27,000 square feet of new retail (approximately 8-10 additional shops). The moderate-use scenario yields 56 residential units and 8,000 square feet of new retail (approximately 2-4 new shops). The significant engineering and operational challenges posed by the metro facilities make this site unlikely to be the first developed in the area, however phased development of portions of the site is a strong possibility.



Potential development on the Metro site

W STREET NODE

Nichols and Savoy Schools

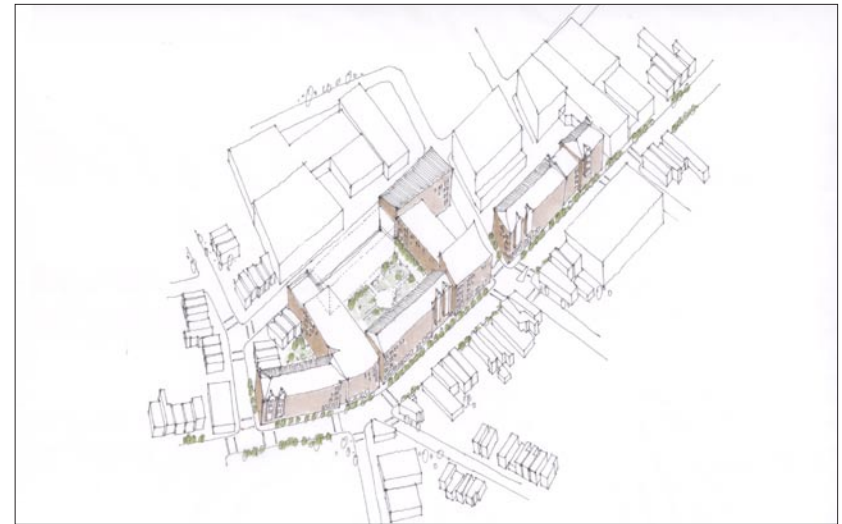
The two schools are important anchors in the community as both civic and architectural resources. Development of this highly prominent site must be cognizant of its critical location at the juncture of the neighborhood main-street, metro station connection, and national park access. As civic uses, development scenarios were not directly market-based, but rather based on how site development might influence the surrounding real estate market. Two scenarios were developed. In both cases, frontage along the length of Howard Road was preserved as publicly accessible open space that does not preclude future development on this valuable site opposite the metro station. School and community recreational needs were accommodated in a new multi-purpose facility, in one scenario located behind the 1910 Nichols Avenue School structure. In a second, preferable scenario, built as a modernized facility for Savoy, Nichols and the community behind Savoy School along the Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue main street.



Potential development on the Nichols and Savoy School Sites

Curtis Properties Site(s):

Curtis Properties controls a number of sites between U Street and Chicago Street along the Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue main street. Added together, roughly 3.2 acres of these sites are currently used as surface parking. Redevelopment, possible under current zoning, could accommodate a number of new market-rate housing units above larger floor-plate retail spaces attractive to national retail chains and/or grocers. Substantial parking for the area as a whole could also be accommodated in above-grade structured parking located along the rail tracks. Two different scenarios demonstrating alternate physical configurations of the sites yield similar products – between 200 and 230 market-rate residential or live-work units and 63,000 – 66,000 square feet of ground floor retail space – enough for a moderate sized grocery store and several anchor retailers. A highlight of the site is a new and enhanced public space showcasing the Big Chair and providing places for residents, shoppers, and workers on lunch break to sit and gather, play chess, or just people watch in the busy center.



Potential development on the Curtis Properties

GATEWAY NODE

Gateway Site:

The single most important site in the Gateway node is the gateway site itself located between the landings of the 11th and 13th Street bridges. Already planned as a major local government office building, the opportunity site study confirmed the importance of development of the AEDC/DRI proposed project at the prominent corner of Good Hope Road and Martin Luther King and provided a number of design guidelines for development. The building should integrate with the neighborhood by limiting height and mass directly on Good Hope Road and stepping up in density toward the back of the site. Active ground floor uses with transparent glass along the sidewalks' edge are critical. The AEDC development should be a mix of uses and include national and independent retailers on the ground floor with office uses above. Entrances should be located immediately along major pedestrian routes – primarily Good Hope Road and/or 11th Street – and oriented toward transit stop. Careful attention should be given to architectural design to diminish the appearance of mass, sensitively contrast with the historic district, and increase transparency and the appearance of activity. Auto access should be minimized to avoid conflicts with pedestrian travel. Buildings should incorporate low impact design and green building techniques.



Potential development on the Gateway site

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Coordinated and strategic investment is critical to the early and continued implementation of the Anacostia Transit Area Plan. Over \$150 million is already programmed for capital improvements in study area neighborhoods. Several new, ongoing, and proposed public agency programs and services must also contribute toward implementation. The early implementation priorities to be completed within the next four years include:

Area-wide

- **Construction of Anacostia Demonstration Line and hiker/biker trail:**

Completely funded with local funds, WMATA will break ground on the Anacostia Demonstration line in the summer of 2004 with operations expected to begin in winter of 2004/5. Concurrent with construction of the streetcar line, DDOT will install a new pedestrian trail along the same rail alignment.

- **Pedestrian safety improvements**

DDOT will install new or restripe faded cross-walks to improve pedestrian connections to transit stations and overall neighborhood safety. Streetlight bulbs are to be replaced. The Firth Sterling and Suitland Parkway will be modestly reconfigured with a turning lane eliminated to improve pedestrian safety at the crossing.

- **Streetscape improvements**

In a coordinated effort, DDOT and WASA together with other agencies will make streetscape improvements including new landscaping and restored street trees, the possibility of relocating utilities under the street rather than overhead, and installation of special street furnishings.

- **Pocket Parks and Public Spaces**

District agencies will collaborate with area non-profits to improve existing public spaces and create new park amenities for the neighborhood. Early projects may include a linear park along the new transit line in the Barry Farm neighborhood, a shared park and playground in cooperation with Savoy Elementary School at Howard Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, and enhancements to the 14th Street plaza between U and V Streets, SE.

- **Wayfinding signs**

District agencies will coordinate to install attractive wayfinding signage in the neighborhood leading visitors and residents to area destinations including the Smithsonian Anacostia Museum, Fredrick Douglass House, library, parks, and other points of interest.

- **Resource connections**

City agencies will work with local community organizations to provide information on contracting requirements and opportunities related to major capital improvements planned in the area as well as information on various housing and commercial business assistance programs.



Renovated historic houses

Metro Node

- **Development of Bethlehem Baptist Church Site**

Although development is ultimately beyond control of the city government, the city will work with the church to encourage development of the site in a way that meets church needs, community objectives, and market demands. The city can explore financing tools and resources and work to address zoning constraints to support desirable development.

- **Restoration of Nichols Avenue School**

ODMPED and other agencies will work with the Thurgood Marshall Academy (TMA) and community to restore the dignity of the historic school, expand high-quality educational resources in the community, and positively contribute to development of the transit area.

- **Reconstruction of Birney Elementary School**

DCPS is finalizing designs for the new Birney Elementary School. Demolition of existing school building will begin this summer (2004). The new school will open for classes by winter 2005.

- **Redesign MetroBus Plaza**

WMATA and city agencies will work to redesign and redevelop the somewhat desolate bus plaza as a visually attractive, pedestrian and transit-rider friendly multi-modal transportation hub and gateway to the community.

- **Restoration of Carver Theater**

NCRC, together with District Agencies, will work with the Good Samaritan Foundation to immediately improve the appearance of the Carver Theater. The Office of Planning will explore any opportunities to incorporate cultural and arts uses into the reuse of the building as appropriate to its history and location.

- **Construction of Toyota Training Facility**

ODMPED, DCHA and the Office of Planning will work with the Toyota Corporation to construct a local training facility at the site of the old Sheridan Terrace that serves the needs of the community and contributes to urban design objectives.

- **Development Support**

NCRC and city agencies will continue to work with private sector partners seeking assistance with business development, site assembly, and physical development in smaller opportunity sites in the area.

W Street Node

- **Development of Shared Parking Facilities**

ODMPED and other agencies will work with local property owners to explore opportunities and financial structures and mechanisms to create a shared parking facility to support local neighborhood development.

- **Development of Curtis Properties' Site**

Assuming parking can be replaced in the area, the city will work with the private property owner to develop the large parking lot site at W and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue as a mixed use development that supports neighborhood objectives.

- **Improved accommodations for Anacostia Clinic**

City agencies will work with the Anacostia Clinic to identify opportunities for improved accommodations accessible to both the main street and transit resources.

- **Positive utilization of government-leased space**

Office of Planning and reSTORE DC will work with city agencies to maximize leased space in the neighborhood – particularly in the 2100 building on MLK – and, if possible, provide additional ground floor retail space.

- **Historic rehabilitation**

The Historic Preservation Division will explore tools and strategies for assisting historic district homeowners and property owners to improve and maintain historic building stock as a key asset for economic development in the neighborhood..

- **Cultural attraction**

City agencies will work with community members and organizations and local artist and cultural resources organizations to promote Anacostia as a cultural destination and available location for creative arts studios and residences.

- **Storm sewer separation and low-impact design**

WASA will separate street storm sewers from household sanitary sewers in a portion of the neighborhood. Street repair resulting from the project provides the opportunity to concurrently implement low-impact design, bury overhead utilities, and enhance the streetscape.



Renovated storefronts

Gateway Node

- **Develop Government Gateway Center**

DC Office of Property Management will initiate construction on the Government Gateway Center in Fall of 2004 and complete construction in 2006 or early 2007.

- **Enhance connection to Anacostia Park**

Good Hope Road between MLK and Anacostia Park will be enhanced as a pedestrian-friendly, green connection from the neighborhood into the recreational areas of Anacostia Park East and Poplar Point.

- **Restore commercial facades**

Continuing the success already demonstrated in the neighborhood, DHCD will again offer resources for façade improvements in Anacostia and encourage improvements on whole blocks at a time.

- **Attract additional retail**

City agencies will promote Anacostia as a retail district and provide resources, information, and technical support to Main Street Anacostia to continue to expand retail offerings on MLK and Good Hope Road.

- **Guide development**

The Office of Planning will work with community organizations and property owners to review zoning tools and regulations to guide future development – particularly the desire for ground floor retail the length of the historic main street.

- **Construct new Anacostia Branch Library**

DC Public Libraries is finalizing designs for the Anacostia Branch Library. Demolition of the existing building will begin in 2004. The new library is expected to open at the same location in 2006.

Poplar Point

- **Improve access to Metro Parking Garage**

DDOT will construct sidewalks to improve pedestrian access to garage. Agencies will explore local circulators to access garage.

- **Utilize surplus Metro Parking Garage Spaces**

City agencies will work with WMATA to make surplus spaces available as monthly permit parking for local retail or office employees or residents.

- **Complete South Capitol Street study**

DDOT complete the extensive study of South Capitol Street Bridge and approaches this fall and provide recommendations for preferred redesign.



Proposed Poplar Point Development and Open Space

